

2011 Human Capital Management Report

**Human Capital Management Report FY 2011**

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Date: <b>December 15, 2011</b>

## **Section I. Human Capital in Your Agency**

Please respond to the following set of questions to describe human capital management at your agency.

**How are the HC/R strategies and priorities being integrated into agency strategic and budget planning?**

**Response:**

USDA's human capital/resource (HC/R) strategies and priorities are integrated into strategic plans, performance plans and budgets through the planning and budgeting process. The Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) is engaged as a strategic partner and participates in the planning process. Once priorities are established, a work plan is developed that includes desired outcomes, metrics and timelines. Financial resources are allocated as needed to ensure a successful outcome.

**What are the agency's primary successes and how did HC/R programs support the outcomes?**

**Response:**

Cultural Transformation is by far one of USDA's most successful initiatives in FY-2011. The goals and objectives were widely communicated throughout the agency, as were the results. Targets and milestones were established, and agency progress was measured and reported to the Secretary on a monthly basis. Partnerships were established with Under Secretaries, members of the Senior Executive Service and senior management officials in all of USDA's component agencies to ensure a unified and collaborative approach.

The goal of transforming USDA into a diverse, inclusive, high performing organization is a major undertaking that entails sustained leadership and a continuous cycle of planning and implementation of effective strategies as well as evaluation of the results. To that end, every system in the Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF) must be, and was fully operational and functioning effectively. For example, USDA utilized the performance management system to drive results. The Department revised the SES and supervisory SL/ST performance templates to include performance requirements for carrying out leadership and management responsibilities for recruitment and hiring, retention, succession planning and performance management. In this way HC/R programs not only support the outcome, but are actually the basis for the successful outcome that was planned.

**What are the primary areas of focus for HC/R in 2012?**

**Response:**

Cultural Transformation continues to be the HC/R focus in 2012. As USDA strives to create a diverse, inclusive and high performing organization, the following strategic priorities have been identified as the primary areas of focus in 2012:

- Enhance executive leadership/management through engagement and collaboration with administrative or HR community.
- Enhance Leadership through performance accountability measures.
- Encourage employee inclusion and develop a means to measure.
- Increase satisfaction of new and current employees through on-boarding and retention

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- strategies that enhance their work experience;
- Improve employee engagement through performance appraisal and employee recognition.
- Update USDA Diversity Road map to meet the intent of Executive Order (EO) 13583 and the government-wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic plan.

### **What are the three major HC/R challenges the agency faces in the next 1 to 3 years?**

#### **Response:**

As a result of shrinking financial and human resources, USDA anticipates the following major challenges in the next 1-3 years:

1. Knowledge Management - Preserving and maintaining the institutional knowledge of seasoned employees before they leave the USDA workforce.
2. As a result of the void created by retirements, voluntary early retirements (VERA), voluntary separation incentive pay (VSIP), and other separations, USDA will be challenged to get the right people with the right skills in the right job at the right time.
3. Engaging and motivating employees will be challenging because of the environment in which workloads are increased (do more with less), pay is frozen, awards funding is restricted, and training funds are limited. In addition, as the workforce demographics change and become more diverse, it will be challenging to find a variety of ways to successfully engage and motivate a multi-cultural, multi-generational workforce.

## **Section II. Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation of the Human Capital Life Cycle**

**Strategic Alignment** - Agency human capital management strategies are aligned with mission, goals, and organizational objectives and integrated into its strategic plans, performance plans, and budgets.

**Program/Initiative Name:** USDA Cultural Transformation

### **Planning:**

The Cultural Transformation (CT) is the largest strategic initiative undertaken by USDA in FY-2011. Initiated and led by Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack, CT is focused on achieving a cultural transformation within USDA by creating a diverse, inclusive, and high-performing organization. By strengthening leadership, management, and more effectively engaging employees, USDA will improve customer service, increase employment satisfaction, and develop and implement strategies to enhance leadership, performance, diversity and inclusion.

### **Implementation:**

OHRM managed the CT initiative and the development of a multi-faceted implementation strategy that included strategies for communicating progress throughout USDA as well as measuring results and holding managers accountable.

#### **Communication Strategy**

- Cultural Transformation website - The site is a platform for creating dialogue among employees and enabling the USDA workforce to share ideas, discuss hot topics, and gain insight into how USDA is creating a new legacy through the Cultural Transformation initiative. Employees are also able to provide instantaneous input around the five key areas driving transformation, which are Leadership, Talent Management, Employee Development, Recruitment and Retention, and Customer Focus and Community Outreach.
- Newsletter – “My USDA” was first issued in November, 2010. Managed by OHRM, this monthly publication is a progress report for employees on USDA’s Cultural Transformation. New initiatives are highlighted as well as actions being taken in response to employee concerns. Employees are afforded fresh opportunities to enhance their professional growth and development, optimize satisfaction with the work they do and understand how they can advance and succeed at USDA.
- Ask the Secretary – Managed by OHRM, this is a means for employees anywhere within USDA to raise important questions related to CT and/or the environment in which they work.

#### **Accountability/Measuring**

- Milestones and Metrics Report – This is a monthly report to Secretary Vilsack (from OHRM) regarding USDA’s progress towards achieving the goals established in the milestones and metrics in the following areas:
  - Diversity of New Employee Hiring/Diversity of Workforce Demographics
  - Disability Employment
  - Veterans’ Employment
  - Student Intern Programs
  - Hiring Reform
  - Work Life and Wellness – Telework
  - Leadership Development

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- Employee Development – Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Process Improvement
- Customer Focus and Community Outreach
- Communication
- Labor-Management Relations
- Equal Opportunity Accountability

The CT reports contain data derived from National Finance Center databases, self-reported data from USDA agencies and staff offices, as well as a report card indicating whether or not the agency is meeting the targets (Green), failing to meet the targets (Red), or progressing toward meeting the targets (yellow), although not quite there yet.

### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

Review and evaluation of the CT initiative is continuous. The Milestones and Metrics Report provides a written evaluation of USDA's progress on a monthly basis. In addition, an interim and year-end report card is issued. Each agency's performance is assessed in the areas identified above, and scored (red, yellow or green) against the established metrics. The results are reported to Secretary Vilsack.

The performance evaluations of agency leadership and members of the Senior Executive Service are impacted by their own agency's performance on the CT report card. In this way accountability is ensured.

FY-2011 outcomes were mixed, but positive progress was noted:

- Five of the 10 component agencies (50%) achieved the 8% target for disability employment.
- No component agencies met the employment target of 2% for targeted disability hires.
- No agencies achieved an increase in their workforce demographic sufficient to achieve overall diversity that mirrors the 2000 Civilian Labor Force (CLF) demographics.
- Six agencies reported greater collaboration between management and union officials.
- Six agencies demonstrated leadership accountability under the EO Accountability initiative. These agencies regularly submitted assessments which were responsive to the required analysis for cases under this initiative.
- All USDA agencies reported having initiated 2-3 major efforts related to process improvement.
- Three agencies met the target of 17% increase in the percentage of new hires that are veterans.
- Two agencies met the target of 40% increase in the percentage of employees participating in telework by October 14, 2011.
- One Mission Area met the target of 90 calendar days for new hires.
- Six agencies met the target that 80% of eligible USDA employees have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in place by September 1, 2011.
- All agencies initiated at least one project that focused on assessing their customer needs and/or increasing their customer's involvement in the decision making process.
- All agencies established two or more mechanisms that are used to communicate with employees on a monthly basis (e.g. newsletter, email, meetings, conference call, etc.).

### **Next Steps:**

At the end of FY-2011, USDA assessed the overall results of the CT initiative. This assessment revealed how far USDA has come and what remains to be done. A more in-depth assessment of the metrics, milestones and results provided insight into the strategies that were most effective in reaching goal attainment. Armed with the information upon which decisions could now be made, discussions were

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held with the leadership team and management officials to plan next steps. As a result of this analysis and discussions, USDA developed its' FY2012 Action Plan for the Cultural Transformation Action Items and Human Capital Accountability Measures. In this way the accountability data informed USDA's next cycle of planning.

The FY2012 Action Plan increased targets in several categories, and established additional metrics and milestone for improving the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) results in the areas of mission accomplishment, employee morale and effective leadership.

**Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The CT initiative aligns with the overall mission of USDA to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science and efficient management. The CT initiative also aligns with our core values of Transparency; Participation; Collaboration; Accountability; Customer Focus; Professionalism; and Results Orientation.

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In the following pages, USDA highlights just a few examples of programs implemented in each of our component agencies that document the full life-cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and also demonstrates its contribution to the overall success of USDA.

<b>Strategic Alignment</b> Program/Initiative Name: Human Capital Management Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
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**Planning:**

Goal #1. Human Capital initiative and activities are aligned with and support the FSIS mission and goals.

The FSIS Human Capital Plan for 2011 – 2016 provides a roadmap for the Agency to follow to ensure that it has the right workforce in place to meet its mission now and in the future. The plan brings together current and future human capital needs and ensures strategies are in place to meet those needs. It draws from previous Agency human capital plans and is tied closely to the FSIS Strategic Plan, which establishes the foundation for all FSIS goals and objectives. Workforce and succession planning are merged with human capital planning to achieve optimum results. The merging of recruitment and student employment programs (SEP) with human capital management is a strategic move that will better align and integrate these functions with the goals and objectives in the Agency's new strategic plan. It also supports the Agency's goals in the human capital plan and it supports the Agency's cultural transformation initiatives.

FSIS implemented the Public Health Information System (PHIS) in FY-2011. PHIS automates and integrates FSIS' systems into one comprehensive easy-to-use data analytics tool. It facilitates the sharing of data among inspection personnel, their managers, and headquarters on a daily basis. PHIS replaced many of the Agency's systems and automated several paper-based business processes. An extensive training program has been underway to train domestic and import inspection personnel who will use the system.

FSIS has supported the Secretary's Cultural Transformation initiative through various means, including training of Agency employees, targeted recruitment of veterans and persons with disabilities and the realignment of recruitment and student employment to meet organizational needs. An Agency-wide workgroup has been formed to address Agency-wide and program-specific projects that will advance cultural transformation at FSIS. In order to ensure long-term and sustainable success, FSIS:

- Integrated the cultural transformation initiative into the FSIS strategic plan and Agency priorities.
- Established an implementation framework and the Cultural Transformation Taskforce under the Agency's Governance Process.
- Completed a number of employee feedback strategies, such as listening sessions, brown bag lunches, administrator's blogs, and Agency studies to make improvements throughout the Agency.
- Established the Business Management Leaders Program in the Office of Management.

**Implementation:**

During FY 2011, a considerable amount of time was dedicated to revising the workforce and human capital plans to better meet current and future challenges that face FSIS. A dedicated human resources planning process that combines strategic thinking with human capital, workforce and succession planning efforts was implemented. The three interwoven planning components cover aspects relating to employee, diversity and organizational needs. Each component concentrates on a specific human resources objective and planning process. The human capital plan provides Agency managers with a

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roadmap to follow when making workforce decisions related to the organization's mission, strategic plan, budgetary resources, diversity, and a set of desired workforce competencies and succession strategies that support the future direction of the Agency.

**Workforce and Succession Planning** - A new workforce planning process was implemented in FY-2011. The new process requires an in-depth analysis of the current workforce and competency skills, mission critical and mission priority occupations, vacancies and ceilings by occupational groups, and the impact new initiatives will have on the workforce. A workforce planning guide was designed to assist managers in their workforce planning efforts. Workforce planning baselines have been established for every FSIS program area to determine not only levels of employment in mission critical occupations but the diversity of the organization. The end result is the engagement of FSIS managers in the workforce planning process. It also assists in projecting workforce needs and competencies required for the future and putting mechanisms in place to address those needs.

Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) positions continue to be a key mission-critical occupation in FSIS. Of the 17 agencies in USDA, FSIS employs the largest number of veterinarians. FSIS continued to work with USDA and OPM to devise the workforce planning parameters that will enable the Federal government to address recruitment efforts to attract veterinarians to the public sector in the future. Nationwide direct hire authority for all VMO positions continues to be an invaluable hiring flexibility that enhances our recruitment efforts. Also, the Agency has maintained aggressive recruitment approaches and used hiring authorities and flexibilities to ensure a low vacancy rate in its field locations. The vacancy rate for veterinarians during FY-2011 has, for the most part, remained less than 10%, which is considerably lower than in previous years.

FSIS' SEP attracts students from diverse backgrounds and areas of the country. Because the SEP is directly tied to succession planning, FSIS has a high percentage of interns who return to the Agency workforce each summer. The SEP successfully placed 121 students throughout the Agency based on program area priorities and needs. Fifteen students were hired through the veterinary student program.

A workgroup was formed to address the consistency of agency reports since many staffs rely on the Human Resources Systems for data. Access to data is now readily available because a SharePoint site was created to store data that is used for agency reporting. Standard operating procedures are being developed to ensure the staffs use the same elements from National Finance Center and other sources when retrieving data for agency reports.

FSIS' Cultural Transformation activities have played a major role in helping FSIS protect public health by making the workplace better for employees and stakeholders. A number of agency-level projects have been identified to advance Cultural Transformation at FSIS.

### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

**Partnership with Agency executives and managers** - Several partnerships have formed between Human Resources and FSIS program areas, specifically in the areas of workforce and succession planning and recruitment and student employment. Workforce planning spans the entire Agency and partnerships with the program areas ensures specific needs are defined and addressed. As a result, benchmarks have been established and are being used to define strategies that are tailored to better serve the programs in their workforce planning and recruitment needs. Different recruitment approaches are being developed for the mission critical occupations and other Agency positions. The Student Employment Program (SEP) placed students based on skills and experience to better meet priorities and manager's needs, which



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resulted in an increase in conversions from Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) appointments to Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) appointments and to full-time employment. Implementation of the Public Health Information System (PHIS) required a dedicated training effort spanning major segments of the Agency. PHIS will continue to be a focal point for enhancing future partnerships throughout the Agency. These partnerships continue to result in human resources being part of forming the overall strategic direction of the Agency.

**Next Steps:**

FSIS will continue to monitor the human capital goals and objectives to ensure progress continues to be made in meeting the HCAAF indices. Data will continue to be used as the basis for determining workforce needs. Managers will continue to be fully engaged in the planning process and will have dedicated plans to assist them in succession planning. Evaluation mechanisms will also be put in place to ensure the Agency's plans are updated as new initiatives are introduced and results monitored.

**Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

Collectively, these components provide Agency managers with a roadmap to follow when making workforce decisions related to the organization's mission, strategic plan, and a set of desired workforce competencies and succession strategies. To support the future directions of the Agency, FSIS continues to engage managers in the workforce planning process.

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<b>Strategic Alignment</b> <b>Forest Service</b>	<b>Program/ Initiative Name: Succession Planning/Management and Workforce Planning Initiatives - HR Priority 2 - Strategic HR and Diversity</b>
<p><b>Planning:</b></p> <p>The Forest Service is moving forward with the development of a systematic approach to Succession Planning and Management. The project coined, “AMC Succession Planning and Management Project,” has a goal to develop a model that is based upon best of breed approaches to succession planning and management.</p> <p>The project aligns human capital management strategies with all the goals of the Forest Service’s Strategic Plan by building a system to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance the collaboration between Program Area and Human Resources Management.</li><li>• Identify and validate the impacts to program areas as a result of significant changes to the Forest Service Strategic Plan, as it pertains to human capital, knowledge and talent management.</li><li>• Ensure alignment of staff and leadership needs with the organization’s future strategic objectives.</li><li>• Enhance employee development, recruitment, and retention programs to meet the critical skills and competencies required for the future.</li></ul> <p>This project also aligns human capital management strategies with the Forest Service’s Cultural Transformation initiative in the area of the renewed commitment to creating diversity in the workforce succession planning, and becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization. This is significant for the Forest Service in that it is a proactive approach to the linkage of human capital management with the agency’s strategic plan.</p> <p><i>Workforce Planning</i></p> <p>Forest Service has historically approached workforce and succession planning through Regional Foresters, Research Station Directors, Area Directors, and Deputy Chiefs rather than a corporate, Forest Service approach. Findings from review of succession Planning and management efforts have identified the need to accomplish workforce analysis by program area, rather than geographic location. This will encourage a more systematic approach to closing identified gaps and ensure more equitable opportunities in training and development. An identified barrier to this approach is the current structure of how data is gathered through the various systems within the agency.</p>	
<p><b>Implementation:</b></p> <p><i>Forest Service Workforce Planning</i></p> <p>Human Resources Management (HRM) utilizes a holistic approach when delivering Workforce Planning guidance. Units are provided instruction for Workforce Planning via a published Workforce Planning Guide. Communication/education is further accomplished through contact via teleconferences, or face-to-face meetings, PowerPoint presentations, Workforce Planning “How To,” and Questions and Answers published in HRM Newsletter.</p> <p>Members of the National Recruitment Team and Center of Learning participate with Workforce Planning staff in presentations to field units. This effort serves to market resources available and build collaboration between the field and HRM.</p> <p>Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (JCCCC) is addressing workforce planning and succession planning with a very deliberate pace. HRM has weekly consultations with the group and provides required data to analyze gaps within the organization. National Recruitment Team members join in, suggesting strategies. JCCCC has two separate goals with their activity; accomplish succession planning for the effective</p>	

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management of the Centers AND identify ways to integrate and market various JCCCC programs so that students are a part of the talent pool Federal agencies seek out.

### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

#### *Succession Planning and Management*

Metrics yet to be determined.

#### *Workforce Planning*

Survey sent to organizational leadership in February 2011 to ensure use of templates and extend additional services as required. Five out of 13 Human Resource Offices responded to the survey and of those, 2 requested and received additional assistance.

### **Next Steps:**

#### *Succession Planning and Management*

- Continue benchmarking process.
- Complete the action plan for this project.

#### *Workforce Planning*

- Primary focus for the organization is placed on the top ten mission critical occupations.
- Workforce Planning does a continuous cycle of evaluation around recruitment, development, retention, and attrition to insure leadership awareness.
- Analysis and workforce plans are sent out to Executive Leadership and published on the HRM website.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

These programs/projects align human capital management strategies with all goals of the Forest Service's Strategic Plan by building a system to:

- Enhance the collaboration between Program Area and Human Resources Management.
- Identify and validate the impacts to program areas as a result of significant changes to the Forest Service Strategic Plan, as it pertains to human capital, knowledge and talent management.
- Ensure alignment of staff and leadership needs with the organization's future strategic objectives.
- Enhance employee development, recruitment, and retention programs to meet the critical skills and competencies required for the future.

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<b>Program/ Initiative Name: Forest Service Breaking Barriers with Mobile Technology - HR Priority 3 - Cultural Transformation</b>
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**Planning:**

The “Breaking Barriers with Mobile Technology” Project, co-sponsored by the Forest Service and the USDA Target Center, is a project to evaluate the use of mobile technology (iPad 2) as a tool for overcoming barriers/stigmas associated with a disability. This project focuses on 3 of the 6 requirements in Executive Order 13548 which are to:

- Increase access to accessible technologies.
- Ensure the accessibility of physical and virtual workspaces.
- Eliminate the stigma associated with disability.

The project aligns human capital management strategies with the purpose of the Forest Service’s Cultural Transformation in the following areas:

- An inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and empowerment of all employees to reach their full potential.
- Modernization of technology and systems.
- A renewed commitment to creating diversity in the workforce and succession planning.

The project is significant for the Forest Service and Agency in that it looks to technology to increase workplace productivity, job satisfaction, and retention of employees with disabilities. It includes research, testing, and analysis of available technology as well as benchmarking of companies that have been successful in implementing technology for employees with disabilities. The final report will be disseminated within the Forest Service and throughout USDA on the Target Center website once the project is completed.

**Implementation:**

Testing of the technology and benchmarking research is scheduled to begin the first part of October and is scheduled to be completed by mid November.

**Evaluation and Outcomes:**

The project team will take the data provided from testing and benchmarking and analyze it against the goals of Executive Order 13548 and Forest Service’s Cultural Transformation. A final report, with recommendations, will be provided to Forest Service and USDA Target Center.

**Next Steps:**

- Testing and benchmarking to begin the first of October.
- Mid November to begin the assimilation and analysis of data.
- Project to be completed by February 28, 2012.

**Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The project aligns human capital management strategies with the purpose of the Forest Service’s Cultural Transformation in the following areas:

- An inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and empowerment of all employees to reach their full potential.
- Modernization of technology and systems.

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Please answer these additional Workforce Planning questions:

How are you using workforce planning data to inform work and budget priorities?

**Response:**

Workforce planning data is used to inform the Agency's strategic human capital priorities. After first assessing the current workforce in terms of the staffing and competency level needed to accomplish its' mission and strategic priorities, USDA uses workforce planning data to determine recruitment and retention priorities, which in turn determines the budget priorities.

In the workforce planning process, USDA analyzes human capital data such as turnover and attrition rates, vacancy levels, retirement eligibility, trends, forecasts, etc. to make an informed decision about the agency's strategic priorities, and the most effective method(s) to achieve its goals.

How is the MCO Competency Profile Chart used to plan and evaluate the effectiveness of workforce planning efforts?

**Response:**

USDA determines the number of employees needed at each proficiency level for each of its mission critical occupations. Then USDA uses the MCO competency profile chart to identify the gaps. The effectiveness of the workforce planning effort is measured by the degree of gap closure in each proficiency level. If a gap still exists after the previous cycle of workforce planning, then USDA conducts further analysis to determine the specific workforce planning component that needs strengthening, and after making the necessary adjustments, implement milestones and metrics to ensure on-going success.

How are competency assessment results used to inform workforce plans?

**Response:**

Competency assessment results provides USDA with important data on its' current workforce. Based on this data, USDA determines how competency gaps will be closed. Whether competency gaps will be closed by recruitment, training, or a combination of both, informs workforce plans and determines the extent of their impact.

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**Leadership and Knowledge Management (LKM)** - Focuses on identifying and addressing agency leadership competencies so that continuity of leadership is ensured, knowledge is shared across the organization, and an environment of continuous learning is present.

<b>Leadership and Knowledge Management (LKM)</b> Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Program/ Initiative Name: Emerging Leaders Development Program
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### **Planning:**

NRCS partnered with the Center for Excellence in Public Leadership (CEPL) at The George Washington University to develop and conduct the Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP). The program's strategy is to customize an established public leadership development program targeted at new and aspiring supervisors and integrate NRCS leaders and content into the program through mentoring, coaching, presentations, and team projects. This program supports the Human Capital Leadership goal as a major component of the Agency's leadership succession planning strategy. The goal is to establish and maintain a pipeline of highly skilled leaders to fill leadership positions as they become available. This program is specifically focused on preparing top performing supervisors to move into managerial positions.

### **Implementation:**

This program was implemented in January 2011. The Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP) is a two-year program, consisting of a one week mentoring module facilitated by NRCS and 12 bi-monthly modules and a team project facilitated by the Center for Excellence in Public Leadership - George Washington University. In addition, the program includes coaching, assessments, action learning projects, stretch assignments and details. The modules will introduce Agency's emerging leaders to management and leadership theory, techniques and concepts applicable to supervision and management in the public sector. Each participant within the program will be paired with a mentor for the duration of the two-year program.

The program was marketed to the Agency using a national bulletin and with conference calls to key groups to get out the message. This included State Conservationists, State Administrative Officers, Training Officers, Human Resources Officers and Special Emphasis Program Managers.

### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

This program is continually being monitored and evaluated. A formal evaluation plan has been created and will measure tangible results. The desired outcome is to develop leaders to ensure that the NRCS mission of "Helping People Help the Land" is a strategic priority for the Agency. Our leaders must be promoting cooperative conservation efforts; encouraging and enabling locally-led, watershed-scale conservation; and facilitating the growth of market-based opportunities and investments in conservation on private lands. This program serves as a key component of the NRCS Leadership Succession strategy.

### **Next Steps:**

Continue with the program, monitoring and evaluating it using the formal evaluation plan.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The desired outcome is to develop leaders to ensure that the NRCS Agency mission of "Helping People Help the Land" is fulfilled, and is a strategic priority for the Agency. In addition, ELDP supports the NRCS Human Capital goals of Leadership and Talent Development/Knowledge Management.

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<b>Leadership and Knowledge Management (LKM)</b> Research, Education, and Economics (REE)	Program/Initiative Name: Leadership and Knowledge Management initiative #2 Agriculture Research Service (ARS) Research Leader Competency Assessment
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### Planning:

“Your 2 Cents” is a website established two years ago to allow all ARS employees to ask questions and provide feedback on issues of concern to them as a means to foster continuous improvement.

Based on a “Your 2 Cents” inquiry about employees providing 360 degree performance input on their Research Leaders (RLs), the ARS Administrator’s Council (AC) assigned an action item to the Research Leaders’ Advisory Council (RLAC) to develop a 360 assessment. This initiative was later scaled back because of complexity, cost, and OPM’s suggestion that input like this should not be used for performance assessment, but for developmental assessment.

Long-term success will be assessed in terms of building competency levels among the RL cadre of leadership in ARS. Since research is the core mission for ARS, improvements in research leadership are expected to result in increased effectiveness and efficiency to the research mission, as well as increases to employee satisfaction among employees directly supporting research work. Short term success for FY-2011 was defined as completing development of the most critical RL competencies on which research leadership throughout ARS could come to consensus on, as a basis for future leadership development.

### Implementation:

Under the guidance of one of Human Resource Division’s (HRD) senior leaders, the RLAC coordinated with RLs throughout ARS to identify the most important leadership competencies for the RL roles based on OPM’s leadership competency framework. The RLAC submitted the competencies to ARS Area Directors, who agreed that the selected competencies were the most critical for the RL role. The competencies identified include definitions and descriptions of how each competency might manifest itself at various levels of leadership, such as team leader, first-line supervisor, manager, and executive. The Administrator’s Council authorized the RLAC to proceed with establishing materials, tools, and procedures for soliciting and using the feedback. Buy-in was achieved because this was an initiative undertaken by the individuals who will be most directly affected and guided by HRD, who will be most immediately responsible for assisting in the development of training and materials to embed the competencies within ARS.

Barriers to further implementation include urgent priorities related to budget and time constraints that are more immediate.

### Evaluation and Outcomes:

ARS considers this initiative a success because it met the short-term goal of having an agreed-upon set of RL competencies which will serve as the building blocks to achieve long-term success outcomes.

### Next Steps:

Diminishing resources are expected to pose continuous challenges to accomplishing ARS’s research mission, rendering the need for more effective research leadership even more crucial. Critical next steps include the following:

- Identify existing training programs where training against these competencies may be added.
- Develop and/or purchase customized training for this particular group of leaders to increase their competency levels in these areas.

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- Create materials, tools, and procedures for soliciting and using feedback to deepen competencies.
- Use data from future Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys and monitor ongoing feedback through various ARS employee feedback media, such as “Your 2 Cents” and the new Cultural Transformation site, “Review, Refresh, Reform” (R<sup>3</sup>).

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The RL competency project directly supports Secretary Vilsack’s Leadership action item in the Cultural Transformation Initiative. It also aligns directly with the following outcomes identified in Management Initiatives published in USDA’s Strategic Plan for 2010-2015.

- Management Initiative I: Engage USDA employees to transform USDA into a Model Workplace; and
- Management Initiative IV: Leverage USDA Departmental Management to Increase Performance, Efficiency, and Alignment.



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Program/Initiative Name: Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNCS) University Programs

### Planning:

Goal: Deliver FNS University (FNSU) programs subject to fiscal constraints, to ensure that FNS employees are provided needed developmental experiences.

Target: The FNSU budget is managed within its allocation while training events are maximized, with the approval of the FNSU Board of Trustees by September 30, 2011.

### Implementation:

FY-2011 presented planning and implementation challenges, due to the Continuing Resolution that lasted for nearly the entire fiscal year, as well as the agency's commitment to implement the Secretary's critical Cultural Transformation Initiative. Due to careful planning, FNCS was able to fund critical ongoing employee development programs, as well as all of the training developed and presented as part of the Cultural Transformation effort. The agency remained committed to completely funding its Leadership Institute Program, the Tuition Reimbursement Program, New Employee Orientation Program, other smaller programs that were not travel-intensive, and three nationwide Cultural Transformation programs.

### Evaluation and Outcomes:

With uncertain financial resources for the 2011 training season, FNSU managed to find new and creative approaches for training, some at little or no cost. One such no-cost approach to training was to use existing training DVDs as a resource to provide training in the competency of communication skills. The two DVD sessions were **THE FOUR STYLES** and **NOBODY'S LISTENING**. Both sessions were well attended and evaluated highly by attendees.

In other cost-savings efforts, FNCS began to increase the training capabilities of HRD/FNSU staff, so that fewer courses and training opportunities would require the hiring of a contractor. As a result, the agency could now offer courses nationwide, multiple times, and without the cost of paying a vendor.

In its first foray into Information Technology training, on-site staff also trained National Office employees on the Microsoft Office suite. These well-attended classes helped employees better utilize their computer skills, and many requested additional courses at the next level of proficiency, which we are now planning for FY 2012.

Additionally, FNSU managed to conduct additional training such as its premiere development program, the Leadership Institute; one Nationwide Learning Lab (*Leadership for Everyone*); several local Learning Labs (*Intergenerational Communications* and *Engaging Employees*); as well as two offerings of *FNS-101 New Employee Orientation* and approved courses through the Tuition Reimbursement Program.

Finally, FNSU:

- Conducted one session of *Human Resources Management for New Supervisors*, a four-day seminar required for all new supervisors.
- Conducted an SES ECQ Seminar for eligible employees; two attendees were ultimately selected for the current SES CDP class.
- Coordinated tailored training for several agency organizations based on their training needs.
- Trained a staff facilitator who conducted group sessions in Strategic Thinking and Project

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Management for agency organizations.

- Conducted numerous bi-weekly sessions regarding Agency on-boarding.

### Next Steps:

- **New Employee Orientation.** FNS-101 will continue as funding permits.
- **Leadership Institute.** A new class of the Leadership Institute will be matriculated in FY 2012.
- **DVD Series.** With the success of the Summer DVD series, the monthly DVD sessions will continue in the fall with sessions focusing on Leadership, Teamwork, and Communications. The programs will be broadened to include the regional offices.
- **Learning Labs.** The Learning Labs for the 2011 training season will continue at the National Office and throughout the Regional offices. 2012 Learning Labs will be developed and offered as funding is made available.
- **Other Trainings.** The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People as well as training requested by program personnel will continue in FY 2012.

### Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:

FNS University ensured that all FNS employees were provided needed developmental experiences despite fiscal constraints. Equally as important, we were able to offer cultural diversity training nationwide, through courses that have been well-received based on evaluation data.

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### **Leadership and Knowledge Management (LKM)** Program/Initiative Name: HC Best Practices Rural Development (RD)

#### **Planning:**

RD is enhancing the Supervisory Training Program (STP) which provides a baseline strategy for aligning RD training and development resources with leadership and organizational priorities.

#### **Implementation:**

RD developed multiple training components for the STP to ensure all supervisory personnel have accessible tools that support continuous learning opportunities and provides direction for the enhancement of leadership and human capital management competence.

- Defined Leadership Competencies
- Blended Learning Modality
- Continuous Learning

#### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

##### **Defined Leadership Competencies**

RD established a defined set of leadership competencies for all supervisors and managers (**approximately 760**) with implementation of the STP. Framework for the STP training curriculum is based on fourteen selected competencies within the six areas of OPM Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's). This competency model represents desired business-driven attributes and provides directional guidance for collective leadership performance expectation in RD.

Communication for the STP leadership competency model was provided to the geographically dispersed supervisory personnel through a live webinar presentation that was recorded for playback; formal written correspondence and assigned to their AgLearn accounts. Additionally, the STP contains a self-assessment component for personal reflection which allows the participant to rate him or herself against the desired level of competence. Not only does this provide an extra measure for ensuring awareness and understanding of the leadership competencies, but it aids in establishing a path for continuous learning.

Q1: Leading Change	ECQ2: Leading People	ECQ3: Results Driven	ECQ4: Business Acumen	ECQ5: Building Coalitions	Fundamental Competencies
Creativity & Innovation Flexibility Resilience	Conflict Management Leveraging Diversity Team Building	Customer Service Problem Solving	Financial & Human Capital Management	Partnering Influencing/ Negotiating	Interpersonal Skills Communications

##### **Blended Learning Modality**

The STP training curriculum leverages a blended learning modality using both online and instructor-led training components. Participants are given twenty-four months to complete all components of the program.

The **online components** are comprised of pre-paid selections from the AgLearn suite of e-learning resources including Skill Soft Course Offerings (SCO), the Leadership Development Channel (LDC) and Books 24x7. Multiple learning options, formats and durations are available for fulfilling each leadership competency requirement.

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Each participant is required to complete thirteen online learning options from a pool of forty-three that are included in the training curriculum over a period of twenty-four months. There is no hourly requirement for the online components. This option allows the participant to make training selections based upon their own preference which adds flexibility and individualism to the program. As of August 2011, participants collectively completed 3,542 online training selections. Averaging 4.6 completions per participant.

The **Instructor-Led** training (ILT) component on “Federal Human Resources Management for Supervisors and Managers” is a contracted service offered in various intervals over a three-year period spanning FY-2011 through FY2013. The training is presented as either a 24-40 hour course. The training addresses key areas of focus in performance management, merit system principles, prohibited personnel practices, equal employment opportunities and labor relations. Target completion for the course is set at 240 completions per year.

RD provided four regional ILT training sessions during FY-2011. As of August 2011, 112 participants have completed the ILT course. Preparations are underway to offer an additional number of ILT sessions during FY2012 and FY2013 so that the target completion standard is met.

Note: Based on competing mission priorities and budget constraints the initial timeframe for completing the STP training components was revised.

### **Continuous Learning**

The STP contains a self-assessment component referred to as the Supervisory Assessment Tool (SAT). The SAT consists of a self-assessment checklist and a supervisory action plan.

The self-assessment checklist outlines areas of competence an effective RD Supervisor/Manager should have. Fourteen selected competencies are divided into categories based on leadership as described in the OPM Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's) and based on the guiding principles of Federal Human Resources Management (HRM). A rating mechanism is included to aide in identifying areas of strength that an individual possesses and the areas where growth is needed.

The supervisory action plan is intended to assist the individual in thinking through a realistic and achievable plan for continuous growth and development. It consists of 10 questions and a worksheet for recording the steps necessary to carry out the plan. Following instructions as noted will result in an action plan, that when properly executed creates a path towards enhanced supervisory effectiveness. The SAT is not a test. It is a personal-use tool for self reflection. Individuals are encouraged to assess their own competence and performance in the areas of leadership and HRM and use the results to develop a plan of action.

### **Next Steps:**

R D will continue its efforts to attain the target goals of the STP. Additionally, RD will enhance the program by adding elements that directly support Telework, IDP, and EEO. RD is well positioned to meet the established targets for the program.

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**Talent Management** – The organization addresses competency gaps, particularly in mission-critical occupations, by implementing and maintaining programs to attract, acquire, develop, promote, and retain quality talent.

USDA launched a pilot program for its new employee orientation. The pilot was successful and as a result, several component agencies were able to realize a positive impact. The following example highlights one such positive outcome.

Program/Initiative Name: Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service (FFAS)  
New Employee Orientation (NEO) Program

**Planning:**

A core team re-designed the NEO process and developed a training program based on feedback from new employees and mandates from USDA. The team researched, revised, and developed the NEO process used for new employees. A project plan was developed that included timelines for improving the on-boarding material, development of an on-line guide, and training presenters to deliver a consistent professional program.

Following the Implementation Plan guidelines, the core team developed the Lesson Plan that would be used when presenting classroom training and would also be posted on HRD's website for use by all employees. The next step included the development of a classroom agenda, which would be used in conjunction with the lesson plan. The handout material was discussed and developed, as the NEO program incorporated many checklists and tools to assist and familiarize managers and new employees with agency programs and policies. Finally, a refresher training plan and agenda was developed. The training will ensure that the information is consistent when the process is replicated and presented to new employees on an on-going basis.

The desired outcome of this initiative was to create and retain a more diverse, inclusive, and high-performing employee-friendly organization. It provides opportunities for employees to enhance their personal and professional development and ensure optimum satisfaction in the work they are doing for the FFAS mission area.

**Implementation:**

FFAS provided substantial input into the USDA on-boarding website, and it also provides a wealth of information for employees on the FFAS HRD website.

The USDA site guides employees through a step-by-step new employment process, which includes a section on each of the following:

- Before you report
- Forms
- Pay & Benefits
- Training
- Resources
- My Agency
- Supervisors
- Welcome video from Secretary Vilsack

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### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

The delivery of the Orientation Training is evaluated immediately following the classroom sessions utilizing on-site Classroom Evaluation. The Evaluation form consists of weighted questions that are rated on a numerical scale from 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest) to determine the effectiveness of the classroom training. It also includes open-ended narrative questions that allow participants to provide feedback; all of which is summarized and used to improve the classroom sessions. Positive feedback was received from the FFAS mission area and USDA, and many of the templates and processes that HRD developed were replicated on USDA NEO/On-boarding website. This training is repeatable, and therefore constantly reviewed, revised, and updated based on feedback from all evaluation sources. HRD demonstrated full compliance with the mandated improvement of the NEO process based on USDA's requirements.

Effective employee on-boarding serves three interrelated purposes. First, it ensures that the employee feels welcome, comfortable, prepared, and supported. Second, these feelings increase the new employee's ability to be productive and successful, both immediately and over time. Finally, this employee success leads to satisfaction and retention, which allows FFAS to continue to fulfill its mission.

It is a hiring manager's responsibility to channel the new employee's energy toward success by helping him or her become embedded in the organization. A supervisor's role is to welcome the new employee, introduce him or her to the culture and values of FFAS, explain what is expected of him or her, and supervise their employment experience. Managers are responsible for helping to make the new employee's transition and employment as smooth and successful as possible. While on-boarding is a year-long process, the first 90 days are critical in retaining a valued employee. To facilitate the manager's role, a checklist is provided to focus on during the employee's first 90 days.

Managers are advised of their responsibility to ensure that each of these items is covered with their new employee. By heeding to the items on the checklist, a manager creates a stronger bond with the employee and ensures a faster path to productivity and inclusion. A supervisory guide and a Sponsor Guide are also provided to assist the hiring manager. A manager's role is critically important for the success of new employees.

### **Next Steps:**

Ensure employees are brought back to participate in follow-up training to help provide additional guidance, supporting the on-boarding process. HRD continues to evaluate feedback from surveys to make improvements and modifications to the program. HRD will also review the Division's Recruitment/Marketing materials to assure FSA is marketing the Agency, HRD, and the Orientation Program.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The effort is helping to improve the NEO process across the mission area and USDA. The NEO process serves to reduce turnover by engaging new employees in accomplishment of agency goals. This, in turn, reduces training costs and allows for the efficient and effective utilization of employees to carry out the mission of the agency.

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### **Talent Management**

Program/Initiative Name: Recruitment of Diverse Candidates  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

#### **Planning:**

To attract a diverse applicant pool, APHIS has taken significant steps to alter its hiring process. For example, new hires must be approved at the Regional Director level or above. This change raises the visibility, importance, and accountability of each hiring event, and ensures that program and support personnel will recruit talent from as broad of a cross section of the civilian workforce as possible. In support of this requirement, the agency developed new operating procedures that bring targeted recruitment efforts into play at the onset of the hiring. APHIS is also examining the possibility of concentrating hiring activity for select job series by limiting vacancy announcements for these positions to an annual or biannual event. The goal here is to ensure the optimization of agency recruitment activity, thereby improving the success rate in attracting more diverse applicants for its mission-critical occupations (MCOs).

#### **Implementation:**

APHIS makes a substantial commitment each year to generate interest among potential candidates from diverse populations pursuing degrees in agricultural sciences to consider employment with the agency. One example is the AgDiscovery program, where students from populations not typically exposed to APHIS activities are given a glimpse into the agency's work through two weeks of presentations by agency personnel. The agency also participates in several scholarship programs, including the Saul T. Wilson and William F. Helms scholarships, as well as the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program, the Washington Internships for Native American Students, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities National Internship Program. An important effect of these efforts has been to attract a more diverse candidate pool for all positions. APHIS also participates in numerous recruitment and outreach events targeting candidates who have already entered the workforce or are about to do so. In 2011, APHIS attended 20 recruitment events sponsored by a number of diverse organizations and academic institutions.

This past year, APHIS expanded its efforts to increase the hiring rate of individuals with disabilities, and enhance the agency's profile as a model employer. A Selective Placement Coordinator for people with disabilities was identified, who participates in monthly White House and Departmental Disability conference calls for the purpose of obtaining timely updates on the Administration's concerns, and participates in conference calls with other selective placement coordinators to share best practices, resources, and effective outreach strategies. APHIS has cultivated partnerships with disability community networks, and has successfully assisted individuals with disabilities, using Schedule A(u) hiring authority to receive consideration for agency positions. The agency has successfully placed individuals with targeted disabilities from a variety of sources, including the OPM Shared (Bender) list. It also established a collaborative process with the MRP reasonable accommodations staff to ensure applicants and newly appointed employees receive timely reasonable accommodations solutions.

This year, APHIS refocused its recruitment initiative for student interns to increase the diversity of our potential student hires. Vacancy announcements were distributed and targeted recruitment and marketing of positions was conducted at colleges, universities, and programs that offer the agency access to diverse student populations, with particular emphasis on minority-service institutions and organizations, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities; 1890, 1862 and 1994 Land-Grant Institutions; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; and Tribal Colleges and Universities.

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An APHIS Recruitment Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives from HRD, Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance, and APHIS program representatives has been formed to help communicate agency hiring strategies and objectives and to enhance the coordination of recruitment and outreach initiatives to better meet workforce objectives. The agency is expanding its recruitment efforts with U.S. Land Grant and Hispanic Serving Institutions through strategic partnerships between the institutions and hiring officials.

In addition to the methods noted above, APHIS has assisted leadership in attracting a diverse applicant pool for senior leadership positions, and developed streamlined hiring and staffing processes to provide better information to applicants and managers throughout the hiring process, including streamlined vacancy announcements and clarification of specialized experience requirements. The agency also created a hiring manager website, which includes hiring models, an explanation of hiring authorities, and detailed guidance on hiring flexibilities. This is in addition to a number of seminars, webinars, and HR Broadcast articles on hiring reform and hiring flexibilities that have been presented throughout the year.

### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

APHIS overall demographic profile increased in the following areas in 2011: Hispanic males and females, African American males and females, Asian males and females, and native American males. In its student intern program, APHIS exceeded civilian labor force (CLF) percentages in all reported categories except White and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Additionally, during FY-2011 APHIS hiring of individuals with reportable disabilities exceeded the Agency's 8% metric goal by 2.8%. APHIS hired 13 individuals with targeted disabilities, nearly twice the number hired in 2010.

### **Next Steps:**

During FY-2011, APHIS worked aggressively to reach its hiring goals, and will continue to strive to meet those goals.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

USDA and APHIS Cultural Transformation Goals

APHIS Strategic Plan –

Organizational Priority 1: Value and Invest in APHIS Employees

Organizational Priority 2: Accomplish our Mission through Effective and Efficient Management of our Programs.



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<b>Talent Management</b> FNCS	Program/Initiative Name: 360 Degree Competency Assessments
<b>Planning:</b> Expand 360-Degree assessment program from 1/3 of all supervisors and managers to all supervisors and managers. Review data and determine what training might be advisable to strengthen the competency abilities of our supervisors and managers, in light of the critical role they play in the Cultural Transformation initiative. Design and deliver training as appropriate.	
<b>Implementation:</b> In order to improve the competency base of our supervisory/managerial cadre, the Administrator made the decision to increase the number of 360 Degree Assessments given in FY-2011 from the usual one-third of the group, to the entire group (i.e., all supervisors and managers). This action was taken in light of the emphasis employee development plays in the Cultural Transformation Initiative, because of the importance of the relationships between supervisors and those they supervise, and assessing and improving, where possible, that desired skill set.  Just under 95 percent of all supervisors and managers participated in the 360-Degree survey; of those, 88 percent also participated in a 1-hour coaching session with an external executive coach, based on the assessment data.	
<b>Evaluation and Outcomes:</b> The aggregate survey data across all 27 OPM Leadership Competencies measured showed an overall high degree of competence (4.3 or higher out of 5 aggregate assessment scores). One practical competency that was identified as potentially benefiting from training was Conflict Management (aggregate scores were all above 4.0 but less than 4.3). In response, we developed and presented "Conflict Management for Supervisors and Managers," a one-day seminar offered nationwide to all supervisors and managers. Response to the training, based on evaluation data, has been positive; a number of participants cited the practical relevance and application of the material to their jobs.	
<b>Next Steps:</b> The course has been offered in all seven regions. During the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of FY 2012 we will provide the course to National Office supervisors and managers. Following that we will review the assessment data again to determine if any other training needs are reflected in the data.	
<b>Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:</b> Strengthening the competencies of our supervisory/managerial cadre is an important element in helping the agency to achieve its mission. Improving their skills is critical to not only executing daily workloads, but to assist their employees to improve their skills as well.	

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Please answer this Talent Management question:

Briefly describe agency process for identifying and updating mission critical occupation (MCO) information

**Response:**

Mission critical occupations (MCOs) were determined through an analysis of skills and competencies needed to accomplish the mission. From that assessment a list of positions emerged that were absolutely critical for the agency to accomplish its' mission. MCO's are reviewed regularly in conjunction with revisions to USDA's strategic plan, and updated as needed.

How is the MCO Resource Chart data used to inform recruitment and retention efforts?

**Response:**

USDA utilizes this chart to determine the specific recruitment and/or retention initiatives needed to achieve its' mission. Based on information in the MCO Resource Chart, USDA determines a specific recruitment strategy for the level of competency needed for each MCO. For example, a recruitment strategy targeted to employees at the basic level of competency differs from the strategy to recruit employees who are at the advanced or expert level. Similarly, USDA determines a recruitment and/or retention strategy that is specific to the position. The recruitment effort for one type of MCO such as a veterinarian is not particularly effective for another MCO such as an HR Specialist. USDA also utilize this data to inform its' decisions regarding where and how many to recruit. By comparing current data with that from the previous year, as well as projections for next year, USDA is able to determine trends which is also used to inform its' recruitment and retention efforts.

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**Performance Culture** - The organization promotes a diverse, high-performing workforce by implementing and maintaining effective performance management systems and awards programs

**Program/ Initiative Name:** FFAS Customer Service Advocate Program

**Planning:**

FFAS was one of the 10 primary study areas involved in the comprehensive 2008 Organization Assessment. One of the key recommendations from the 2008 Organization Assessment focused on embracing an effective customer relationship management culture. A primary goal of HRD's overall transformation has been to embed that formal and comprehensive customer service culture. To this end, FFAS is implementing a Customer Service Advocate Program.

Before moving to the stage of functional realignment, HRD conducted an extensive survey to measure customers' satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of HR services. This survey provided HRD with actionable feedback by identifying areas for HRD to further improve and information about how important those services/products are to customers. This permitted HRD to prioritize improvement efforts in those areas that are most important to their customers.

The Customer Service Advocates participate and serve as advisors by providing a comprehensive customer service program that includes evaluating strategies, identifying problem areas, examining deficiencies, or other similar factors that can affect customer service satisfaction. Responsibilities of the positions include referring human resources services, customer issues, and concerns to the proper HR functional area, as well as personally resolving customer service inquiries and relevant issues for the servicing organizations.

HRD developed a comprehensive project plan to outline the critical components of the program. The components included:

- Conducting briefings to HRD management team
- Development of a PM Notice
- Development of communication plan
- Development of web pages
- Development of agenda for meetings with customers
- Development of Customer Service Survey
- Development of methodology to analyze and publicize survey results

**Implementation:**

The program was successfully implemented in September 2011. This program was designed to assist the agency in exceeding their customers' expectations as well as experience their value everyday through its service delivery. The Customer Service Advocates participate and serve as advisors by providing a comprehensive customer service program that includes evaluating strategies, identifying problem areas, examining deficiencies, or other similar factors that can affect customer service satisfaction. Responsibilities of the positions include referring HR services, customer issues and concerns to the proper HR functional area, as well as personally resolving customer service inquiries and relevant issues for the servicing organizations.

One component of the program introduces a survey which presents the various elements of the Quality – Communication – Attitude – Accountability – Timeliness (QCAAT) customer service model.

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### **Evaluation and Outcomes:**

The survey results provide feedback to ensure that every HRD employee is providing excellent customer service. Significant trends are identified and the results analyzed and evaluated on a quarterly basis. From this, comprehensive strategies are developed to facilitate effective and efficient resolution of issues identified. Quarterly reporting of evaluations is provided to all three agencies.

### **Next Steps:**

The survey results will be utilized to recommend appropriate training for staff members and also provide feedback from customers. The survey results will be publicized to influence positive performance and duplicate exceptional customer service. In addition, the survey results will be incorporated into the quarterly Service Level Agreement Reports provided to the applicable mission area agencies.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

Through the various components of the program, quantifiable and reportable improvements will be made to support mission area goal accomplishment. The Customer Service Program provides added value to managers and HRD through the following outcomes:

- Improved understanding of workload analysis and succession planning process
- Improved engagement with managers to facilitate attainment of Hiring Reform Goals
- Increased knowledge through publication of Hiring Reform and HRD website
- Increased knowledge of future needs of the organization
- Increased awareness of challenges and strategies to overcome

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<b>Performance Culture</b> FSIS	Program/Initiative Name: Public Health Human Resources System
<p><b>Planning:</b></p> <p>Goal #3. Maintain a performance management system that is linked to the FSIS mission and goals and hold managers and employees accountable for results and rewards employees for successful performance.</p> <p><u>Public Health Human Resources System (PHHRS):</u></p> <p>FSIS completed its second successful year under PHHRS, a pay-for-performance pay band system which is designed to enhance and change the way FSIS compensates, recognizes, and rewards its employees. PHHRS is the only USDA demonstration project on pay banding approved by OPM. Approximately 2,900 non-bargaining unit employees are covered by the PHHRS and the second payout cycle was completed in January 2011. The PHHRS focuses on employee accomplishments and results.</p>	
<p><b>Implementation:</b></p> <p>During the second PHHRS performance cycle, the Agency successfully processed 2,905 pay increases and ratings, 141 lump sum bonuses and more than 1,637 performance awards. All actions were processed on time with a less than 1% error rate. For the second year, performance awards were determined using a share methodology. As a result, 58% of PHHRS employees received an award, up from 53% the first year. The key to the system is to recognize top performers with higher salary increases so that performance results rather than longevity determine pay increases. The system is moving the Agency closer to a performance-based culture, which aligns with the Departmental goal of managing for results.</p> <p>The development and execution of the PHHRS Awareness Campaign is improving supervisor and employee understanding of and support for PHHRS. The PHHRS Awareness Campaign consists of a network of creative approaches including PHHRS Real Life Scenario email series; PHHRS Myth Buster; Engage the Supervisor; “PHHRS Connect” talk show; and PHHRS flyers and posters. As a result, FSIS successfully increased the knowledge base of PHHRS employees from Fair to Good/Very Good (1.33 increase on a 5-point scale) and achieved an overall rating of 3.89 on a 5-point scale.</p> <p>An interim survey was conducted in March 2011 to provide an assessment of employee perceptions during post implementation. FSIS achieved a 64% response rate.</p> <p>The PHHRS Handbook was improved to address issues that arose during the first year of the Demo Project and in response to OPM and stakeholder feedback. The revisions have resulted in improved policy, criteria, and clarity of information.</p> <p>The Agency also updated and improved the pay-for-performance policies relating to performance management and the pay pool process and developed enhancements to the automated Performance Rating Tool (PRT). The PRT is used by supervisors to record mid-year progress reviews and ratings and by Human Resources professionals for reporting purposes.</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation and Outcomes:</b></p> <p>Only 4.8% of PHHRS employees filed requests for reconsiderations of their FY 2010 performance ratings. This is a 0.2% decrease from the previous year. According to OPM, in the first year of demonstration projects, about 10% of the population requests reconsideration of their ratings, with small drops in subsequent years. FSIS reconsideration requests are less than half of OPM’s average.</p>	

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Under Title 5, Chapter 47, the Demonstration Project Authority requires ongoing evaluation and assessment over the life of the project. Following the receipt of the results from the 2010 PHHR Implementation Employee Survey and feedback from nine focus groups, it was clear that employees still had many misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding PHHR. As a result, the PHHR Awareness Network was conceived and launched in FY-2011. The Network implemented various activities to promote a better understanding of PHHR and reduce misconceptions. The PHHR Awareness Campaign consists of a network of creative approaches including PHHR Real Life Scenario email series; PHHR Myth Buster; Engage the Supervisor; "PHHR Connect" talk show; and PHHR flyers and posters.

As part of the evaluation of the PHHR Demonstration Project, OPM conducted an interim survey in March 2011 and then held random focus groups during the summer in order to provide an assessment of employee perceptions during post implementation. The interim survey results revealed:

- Increased employee support for PHHR by 5 percent.
- Improved understanding of PHHR since the 2010 survey. More than two-thirds of PHHR employees (66.8%) say they understand the system.
- Noticeable increase in favor of PHHR among veterinarians; 75% felt their pay was the same or better under PHHR. This is significant in that one of the reasons for implementing PHHR was to improve recruitment and retention of the veterinary occupation, a traditionally hard-to-fill job. Favorability scores among Consumer Safety Officers and supervisors also increased significantly.
- General employee satisfaction on their performance appraisals, pay as compared to the GS system, timeliness of feedback on performance, job classification process, clarity of performance standards, and the reconsideration process.

FSIS used OPM's findings to make improvements to the PHHR Demonstration Project Policies and Procedures Handbook. In FY12, the Agency also plans to make changes to the project's *Federal Register Notice* to address some issues that have arisen.

### **Next Steps:**

Under Title 5, Chapter 47, the Demonstration Project Authority requires ongoing evaluation and assessment over the life of the project. FSIS will continue to use OPM's findings to make improvements to the PHHR Demonstration Project Policies and Procedures Handbook. In FY12, the Agency also plans to make changes to the project's *Federal Register Notice* to address some issues that have arisen.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

Support and buy-in is most critical to the success of any pay-for-performance pay band system. An interim survey was conducted in March 2011 to provide an assessment of employee perceptions during post implementation. Results from the 2011 PHHR Interim Survey showed that understanding of the system improved overall compared to the last survey. More than two-thirds of the PHHR population (66.8%) says they understand the system. OPM considers a favorability score of 66% and above in overall understanding a strong position. They indicated that this score is likely due to a proactive, effective communications strategy. Clearly these efforts played a role in improving understanding and support of PHHR.

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<b>Performance Culture</b> REE	Program/Initiative Name: Implementation of Management Directive 715
<p><b>Planning:</b> Every year the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) works with HRD and REE agency leadership to carry out a range of initiatives with minority serving institutions in an effort to further diversify the REE workforce. The planning of these initiatives is an ongoing process, and action plans are contained in the five-year USDA strategic plan, based on the Management Directive 715.</p>	
<p><b>Implementation:</b> As a proactive effort to increase diversity in the workforce, ARS provided over \$114 million toward partnerships with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities; 1890 National Scholars Program, 1862 and 1994 Schools; Tribal Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership; and the Federal Asian Pacific Advisory Council. The agency has consistently supported the Secretary's initiative on summer interns by employing more than 1,000 interns this year. ARS continues to support the Post-Doctoral and Student Career Experience Programs by converting the participants to permanent positions. Since 2001, ARS has sponsored two awards annually for outstanding supervisory and non-supervisory employees to recognize and encourage exemplary achievements and commitment to workforce diversity. ARS has National Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) serving on USDA advisory councils for Asian American and Pacific Islanders; African Americans; Persons with Disabilities; Hispanics; and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered; Native Americans; and Women. The Agency is instrumental in the planning of the USDA observances for SEP and encourages employees to attend these events. ODEO prepares and distributes statistical information for each SEP that data is available and disseminates to all employees.</p> <p>Cultural transformation initiatives have been incorporated into the performance plans of SES positions, which will be extended to all GS-15 and below supervisory positions' performance plans. ARS has established diversity hiring goals, which have been incorporated into leadership performance metrics.</p> <p>REE awarded over \$10 million via contracts to small disadvantaged businesses including women-owned businesses, historically underutilized business zone, and service-disabled veteran-owned small firms.</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation and Outcomes:</b> REE tracks and monitors overall hiring against diversity targets. The agency has increased the overall representation of minorities in student appointments by almost 4 percent between June and July 2011, improving overall student minority representation by 0.5 percent. Additionally, REE showed a 1 percent increase in overall hiring diversity, including veterans and persons with targeted disabilities. Hiring of Hispanic females has increased by 1.31 percent since FY 2010. Similarly, the agency increased the number of white females by two and Asian Americans by one among SES positions.</p> <p>Relevant information on the REE mission area was provided to more than 30 small business representatives attending the annual Small Business and Ability One Program Award Ceremony. The agency was commended for taking the lead to conduct this type of outreach effort to assist small businesses in their marketing efforts.</p> <p>The REE-nominated firm Fallsway Construction Company, L.L.C. received the USDA Historically Underutilized Business Zone Business Contractor of the Year.</p>	

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**Next Steps:**

REE will continue supporting and implementing initiatives and strategies aimed at promoting and cultivating a highly competitive and diversified workforce.

**Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

The initiatives describe above are aligned to the agency's mission of creating and maintaining a competitive and diversified workforce free from discrimination, harassment, or retaliation; and characterized by an atmosphere of inclusion and career development opportunities.



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<b>Performance Culture</b> APHIS	Program/Initiative Name: Performance Evaluation and Recognition Systems
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**Planning:**

In order to optimize a results-oriented performance culture, APHIS established the following goals:

1. Increase the percentage of annual evaluations and mid-year reviews completed within established timeframes for eligible employees.
2. Establish a diverse team of employees from all programs and staff offices to review the awards directive to ensure that it addresses the issues or awards transparency and public recognition needs.
3. Periodically distribute awards selection process and criteria to all employees.

**Implementation:**

APHIS conducted “Appraising Performance” during the year, which addressed establishing performance plans, ensuring two-way communication/feedback throughout the year, best practices, and practices to avoid when conducting performance evaluations. A new MRP Performance Management Directive was developed that summarizes performance system coverage and provides web links to other performance management policies and regulations. The Performance Management Subchapter of the HR Desk Guide was also revised to include new supervisory plan requirements (hiring reform, cultural transformation), strengthening the need for two-way feedback during the performance year, and adding web links to other directives, regulations, and HRD contact information. (Both the Directive and Subchapter are currently in the clearance stage.)

APHIS offered a variety of classroom and online training to all employees on diversity and inclusion in order to improve individual and organizational performance. To that end, the agency holds Cultural Transformation training sessions aimed at establishing common ground, knowledge and understanding about the issues and challenges impacting APHIS’ mission and goal accomplishments. The agency has also developed a web-based, interactive training program on civil rights. The training includes the essentials of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), the EEO process for civil rights/discrimination complaints, and the collaborative resolution process for workplace conflict outside of the EEO process. Supervisory training, SES forums, leadership series seminars, basic and intermediate leadership development programs, and an advanced leadership development program are also offered to promote career growth and facilitate succession planning.

An awards and recognition working group, comprised of representatives from APHIS Program/Support Units, was established to ensure that issues regarding transparency of the awards process and public recognition needs were addressed. To date, the work group has reviewed the Department’s new Departmental Regulation on Employee Awards and Recognition and identified areas where further decision and documentation are needed at the agency level; researched and discussed various aspects of the awards policy that are left to the agency’s discretion; formed subgroups to begin working on specific outputs such as a draft Directive and HR Desk Top Guide; updated its Awards and Recognition website, and began developing communications and marketing plan. The work group ensures that any guidance developed and actions planned incorporate feedback obtained through the Cultural Transformation Action Plan, MRP Management Review, OPM’s Employee Viewpoint Survey, and OPM audit results.

**Evaluation and Outcomes:**

In reviewing the highest increases between 2010 and 2011 EVS results we found the following questions had substantial increases: ‘In the last six months, my supervisor/team leader has talked with me about my performance,’ (up 9% from 2010 score) and ‘Employees are rewarded/recognized for providing high

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quality products and services to customers,' (up 7.2% from 2010). These results are largely due to these accomplishments:

- One hundred percent of APHIS eligible employees received mid-year progress reviews during FY-2011. Each eligible employee participated in a mid-year discussion with his/her supervisor within the established timeframes. This exceeds APHIS' performance metric of 90 percent mid-year and annual performance review completion within established timeframes.
- APHIS established a diverse team of employees from all APHIS programs and staff offices to review the award directive and address transparency in its awards and public recognition process.

### **Next Steps:**

APHIS recognizes that an effective performance management system works best where there is a strong linkage between organizational culture and the types of rewards and recognition used, alignment between outputs/outcomes and values/behaviors and rewards and recognition, and consistency in application of rewards and recognition. When these factors are aligned, there is credibility in the performance management system. The agency will continue to build on this framework to effectively reinforce a performance-based culture by linking awards and recognition to quality of work, achievement of strategic goals, and noteworthy public recognition.

### **Outcome Alignment with Agency Mission:**

APHIS Strategic Plan -

Organizational Priority 1: Value and Invest in APHIS Employees

Organizational Priority 2: Accomplish our Mission through Effective and Efficient Management of Programs.

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Please answer this additional Performance Culture question:

What actions has your agency taken to improve your Employee Viewpoint Survey Performance Culture Index (PCI)? And/or what plans has your agency made to improve on the elements that feed into the Overall PCI?

**Response:**

USDA moved from a ranking of 30<sup>th</sup> in 2010 to 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2011 in the Employee Viewpoint Survey results-oriented performance culture index, demonstrating positive employee satisfaction. USDA continues to implement process improvements to address the following:

- SES – We have initiated leadership strategies to improve leadership accountability and effectiveness. We have established the requirement that performance plans of all SES managers and supervisors will include the cultural transformation initiatives and ensure the same for other staff and applicable employees in that organization to include how they will be evaluated on those measures.
- Performance Plans – Performance plans of all SES, managers and supervisors include a performance element and standards that hold the supervisor accountable for the performance management of subordinates.
- Performance plans of all SES, managers and supervisors will include a performance element and standards that hold the supervisor/manager accountable for achieving the goals set in the CT Milestones and Metrics Report.
- Results Oriented Performance Culture – Continue to improve the plans, mid-year reviews and annual evaluations completed within established timeframes for eligible employees.
- Awards – USDA issued a DR in January 2011 establishing a Department-wide Employee Awards and Recognition Program. Its purpose is to recognize organizational, individual and group performance exceeding leadership and/or public service expectations, especially those that contribute to the core values, mission, and goals of the Department. In addition, USDA issued an incentive award program guide clearly identifying requirements for recommending and approving awards, as well as for reviewing the use of incentive awards.
- USDA has also developed a Nature of Action Code for tracking Time-Off Awards resulting on performance ratings which will allow us to track changes on awards for this fiscal year, and agencies will help to ensure these changes were implemented in their programs. Work has been done to focus on distinctions in performance to reflect differences between fully and fully successful ratings.

Further, USDA revised the Performance Management DR to require measures for cultural transformation and hiring reform. A memorandum was also issued to agencies on the new requirement pending issuance of the revised directive explaining the new requirements. Agencies were advised that USDA established standardized performance measures which apply to all USDA supervisory positions including SES and SL/ST positions. These measures are a continuing requirement to be included in the performance plans for FY-2011.

We also developed a library of performance measure examples for key positions designed to provide illustrations and ensure consistency. In addition, guidance has been provided to agencies on how to get feedback from the customer both formally and informally; in addition to continuing efforts to make available and publicize the USDA AgLearn Performance Management training which provides information on the performance management process; as well as working with the OHRM Training

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Office to publicize a variety of training opportunities related to performance management available to managers and employees.

USDA's rating distribution for FY 2010 showed that performance management enables the agency to make distinctions in level of performance.

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### ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ONLY IF YOUR AGENCY MEETS THE CRITERIA SET AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH QUESTION

Agencies should evaluate their non-SES appraisal programs every 3 years using OPM's PAAT. If the agency's weighted average PAAT score is less than 80 out of 100 points, the agency should make improvements to the program(s) and then evaluate the program(s) again, until the program(s) score at least 80 points.

If your agency's PAAT score is less than 80, please describe what actions have been taken to evaluate the program(s) in order to improve the score. If your agency's PAAT score is 80 or above, you do not have to answer this question.

**Response:**

USDA received an overall PAAT score of 70. As a result, component agencies were directed to develop action plans with strategies for improvement based on their last PAAT scores. Component agencies are required to complete another PAAT in March 2012, and USDA will use the submissions to complete an overall USDA PAAT for OPM review. USDA will submit the PAAT to OPM by June 30, 2012.

### SES or SL/ST Performance Appraisal System(s)

The correlation coefficient of the agency's SES members and their performance pay should be at least .5

If your agency has a correlation coefficient less than .5, what actions are you taking to improve the correlation? If you agency's coefficient is .5 or above, you do not have to answer this question.

**Response:**

USDA has a correlation coefficient of 0.79, which is greater than .5

If your agency has an SES or SL/ST appraisal system that does not yet have full certification, what actions are you taking to improve the system?

**Response:**

USDA requested full certification of its SES and SL/ST appraisal systems on April 25, 2011. OPM granted USDA full certification of its SES system on July 29, 2011, and full certification of its SL/ST system on August 26, 2011.

### **Section III: MCO Profile and Competency Charts**

#### **General Instructions:**

The measurement year for all charts is from October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011. In the charts the yellow cells will automatically enter or calculate data. The dates for the columns will automatically fill from the dates entered at the top of the charts. Enter data in all other columns. There should not be any blank cells. Enter attrition as a negative number. (Cells will turn red if a positive number is entered for projected or actual attrition.) Make sure you follow the instructions for the charts found in Section III.

*“Agencies will identify specific IT program management competency gaps in the next Human Capital Management Report and develop specific plans to close the IT PM gap. To ensure that agencies are executing these plans, senior agency executives will review their progress and provide an interim report to OMB, 12 months after the next Human Capital Management Report is published.”*

OMB has determined that all agencies should report on the following six IT program management competencies at a minimum:

1. Project Management
2. Information Technology Program Management
3. Strategic Thinking
4. Stakeholder Management
5. Influencing/Negotiating
6. Risk Management

Note: Agencies can choose to report competency gap closure using whatever proficiency scale they have in place. OPM does not prescribe a five-level proficiency scale. The template is created for a five-level proficiency scale, but can be adjusted accordingly.

- **Columns A-D and L** should be left blank.
- **Columns I and J** will be calculated automatically.
- **Column E and G** focuses on projected short-term and long-term needs for competency and proficiency levels. In these columns, insert the short-term and long-term projection of competencies and proficiency levels needed in each MCO or leadership level.
- **Column F and H** enter projected short-term and long-term attrition. These numbers represent the attrition the occupation is expected to experience during the same period of time as used in columns E and G, and should also be based on workforce analysis and planning.
- **Column K** enter the end of year FY-2011 results for number of employees who are at or above the desired proficiency level.

For the 2012 HCMR, agencies are not expected to submit competency profile charts, but should submit analysis on what actions or activities have taken place over the last year to close competency gaps.

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Competency Profile Chart for Mission Critical Occupation(s) (MCOs)												
Agency Name												
Size of Occupation												
Name of MCO(s)	IT Program Management											
Start Date of Measurement Year	October 1, 2010											
End Date of Measurement Year	September 30, 2011											
Date of Workforce Analysis												
Date of this Report												
Agency Point of Contact (POC)												
OPM Human Capital Officer (HCO)												
Critical Competency	STARTING POINT (DATA FROM BEGINNING OF MEASUREMENT YEAR)										RESULTS ACHIEVED (END OF YEAR)	
	(A) One-Year Target (To Be) for Number of Employees Who Need the Proficiency Level Indicated in the Row on the Competency by the End of this Measurement Year (September 30, 2011)	(B) As Is on October 1, 2010, the Number of Employees Currently on Board who Possess this Proficiency Level According to the One-Year Target for the Competency and are At or Above this Level	(C) Projected Attrition for This Year (October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011) (Enter Negative Numbers for Attrition)	(D) Targeted Competency Gap/Surplus to Close This Year, Including Projected Attrition (A positive number is a surplus; a negative number is a gap. If 0, there is no gap or surplus.) (B) + (C) - (A)	(E) Target for Number of Employees Who Need the Proficiency Level in the Row for this Competency by the End of FY2013.	(F) Projected Attrition for End of FY2013 from Employees with This Competency Proficiency Level (Oct 1, 2011 - Sept 30, 2013) (Enter Negative Numbers for Attrition)	(G) Long-Term Goal for Number of Employees Who Need this Proficiency Level on this Competency by the End of FY2015	(H) Projected Long-Term Attrition for End of FY2015 (Oct 1, 2011 - Sept 30, 2015) from Employees with This Proficiency Level (Enter Negative Numbers for Attrition)	(I) Competency Gap/Surplus to Close by the end of FY2013 (Including Attrition) (K) + (F) - (E)	(J) Competency Gap (-)/ Surplus (+) to Close Long-Term by End of FY2015 (Including Attrition) (K) + (F) + (H) - (G)	(K) As Is on September 30, 2011, the Actual Number of Employees on Board Who are At or Above the Proficiency Level They Need	(L) Was One-Year Target Met for Closing Competency Gap/Surplus? (Target met if 0. If closing a gap, positive number means surpassed target, and negative means did not meet target. If reducing a surplus, negative number means surpassed target, and positive means did not meet target.) (K) - (A)
Project Management												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Information Technology Program Management												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strategic Thinking												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stakeholder Management												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Influencing/Negotiating												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Risk Management												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other IT PM Competency (optional)												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other IT PM Competency (optional)												
Awareness												
Basic												
Intermediate												
Advanced												
Expert												
Competency Not Applicable/Not Needed												
Totals for this Competency:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## **Section IV Human Capital Planning Documents**

Please indicate if you have the following:

Current Workforce Plan	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date Revised <u>October, 2010</u> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Current Human Capital Strategic Plan	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date Revised <u>October, 2010</u> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Current Succession Plan	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date Revised <u>2010</u> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic Recruitment Plan	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Routinely Used New Hire Survey	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not needed because of on-boarding
Routinely Used Exit Survey	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially – In process of implementing USDA-wide survey

## **Section V: HC Government-Wide Initiatives**

Please answer the following questions on Government-wide initiatives:

### **Veteran's Employment Initiative**

Employment of Veterans: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-veterans-employment-initiative>

In accordance with Section 3 paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of Executive Order 13518 - Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, please describe how your agency has improved employment opportunities for veterans that are linked to increased hiring.

**Response:** In FY-2011, USDA improved employment of veterans to 10.1% of its total workforce and 24% of all permanent employees. USDA created and delivered training on the government-wide veterans' employment initiative. The training included the topics of veterans' preferences and special authorities for the hiring of veterans and was delivered to USDA personnel that included not only hiring managers and HR personnel, but also senior managers, civil rights personnel and special emphasis managers. Training was provided in large settings such as the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Annual Diversity Conference attended by several hundred USDA's civil rights directors and staff; the Food Safety & Inspections Service's Annual Diversity Training Conference; and, the USDA Forum at the Annual Perspectives on Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Government Training Conference. Training was also conducted in small group, interactive sessions with agency leaders during recruitment planning conferences; monthly in-service training sessions and other similar venues.

In addition, USDA marketed itself as an employer of choice to transitioning service members by participating in job readiness workshops including the Department of Veteran Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program; OPM's Veterans' Employment Workshops and Walter Reed Army Medical Center's Transition Assistance Program. USDA also conducted workshops with DoD's Hiring Heroes at Fort Sam in Houston, TX and Camp Pendleton, CA, as well as the American Legion's National Convention. USDA's sub-agency special emphasis program managers and HR officials participated in more than 50 events for transitioning service members, veterans and wounded warriors.

To improve employment opportunities for veterans, USDA identified key occupations, and posted those positions on OPM's Fed's Hire vets website. All veterans who inquired about employment opportunities were personally assisted by USDA's Veterans Employment Program staff.



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As a result of these efforts, 7.7 % (1,555) of USDA's FY-2011 hires were veterans. USDA employs more than 10, 400 veterans, of which 43% are in the Forest Service's mission critical occupation of Forestry Technician. This job series contains all of USDA's Fire Fighters, which are vital to preserving the Nation's national forests. USDA's Forest Service, in collaboration with Veterans' Green Jobs and the Southwest Conservation Corps, conducts the 12-week National Veterans Firefighter Leadership Development Program and trains veterans to qualify for the GS-0462 Wildlands Firefighters. Approximately 250 veterans have been trained each year.

### **Extension of Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Federal Employees**

Implementation of the President's Memorandum Regarding Extension of Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Federal Employees:

<http://www.chcoc.gov/transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=2982>

Reporting requirement - For each of the benefits identified in the reports the agency submitted to OPM pursuant to the President's June 17, 2009 memorandum, as well as any additional benefits it may have identified, each agency must (a) identify any benefits it has already extended to cover same-sex domestic partners and/or their children; (b) identify each benefit that is to be extended; (c) provide an update on the status of extending the benefit; and (d) include a projected date by which the benefit will be extended. Each agency's reporting obligation shall continue until such time as it reports that all benefits covered in its reports that are capable of being extended have in fact been extended to cover their employees' same-sex domestic partners and their children, as applicable.

#### **Response:**

All benefit programs under USDA administration, including any authorities outside of Title 5, US Code have already been officially extended to same-sex domestic partners of Federal employees, and their children, where applicable. In FY-2011, Secretary Vilsack took additional steps of inclusion by (1) amending USDA's Civil Rights Policy statement to include gender identity and gender expression, and (2) amending the federal travel regulations to include domestic partners.

### **Hiring Reform**

Hiring Reform: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-improving-federal-recruitment-and-hiring-process>

#### **How has the Government-wide focus on Hiring Reform improved recruiting and hiring in your agency (include supporting data)?**

In the President's memorandum dated May 11, 2010, "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process", agencies were directed to make significant improvements in the federal recruiting and hiring process. Specifically, the President's memorandum called for reform in the hiring process. Agency managers are to assume a leadership role in the hiring process and agencies are to take a more common sense approach to make it easier for the public to apply for and be hired for Federal positions.

Consistent with the President's memorandum and OPM's guidance, Hiring Reform is identified as being one of the strategic management initiatives in the USDA Strategic Plan for 2010-2015. USDA has made significant progress toward achieving this strategic initiative and is moving from Hiring Reform to Hiring Excellence in the recruitment and hiring process.

During 2011 USDA focused on meeting established milestones and monitoring the progress of component agencies to assist them in identifying and removing obstacles under the following six initiatives of Hiring Reform:

- Eliminating narrative KSA's at the initial stage of the application process;
- Allowing an applicant to apply for a Federal position with a resume and cover letter;
- Implementing category rating;
- Increasing hiring managers' accountability;
- Improving the quality and speed of hiring and;
- Notifying applicant's about their status at four key stages in the application process.

In 2011 USDA continued to make progress on the initiatives implemented on 2010. During 2011 the following actions were taken:

- Instituted Department-wide measures of accountability ensuring mission areas were in compliance with Hiring Reform goals and objectives. Goals were set: Time-to-Hire (90 days); Managers report being involved in workforce planning (75%); Applicants Satisfaction with Hiring Process (85%). Corrective action was taken when goals were not met.
- Developed an integrated approach to Hiring Reform with our mission areas. Agencies reported data monthly and we met with the HR community in each mission area to discuss their progress and to dissect problem areas where there was no progress.
- Established monthly reporting requirements for the component agencies to report to the Secretary their data to further enhance accountability in meeting the Department's goals.
- Eliminated Department policy barriers that empowered hiring managers to exercise discretion. The Department eliminated the policy that JOAs must be open a minimum of 30 days.
- JOAs were streamlined to 5 pages. Department-wide JOAs were randomly checked for compliance with goal set for JOA's length to be no longer than 5 pages. Component agencies that were not in compliance were identified and corrected.
- Established milestones and metrics for consistent measurement on the USDA targeted goals in FY-2011; Issued guidance on the elimination of KSAs and the use of cover letters and resumes to

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apply for jobs; Provided education materials on category rating; Drafted changes to existing USDA Merit Promotion Plan; Implemented communication plan; Provided training on category rating; Drafted changes to existing Delegated Examining Unit Policy and Drafted changes to the OHRM web site with tools related to the Hiring Reform initiative.

- Developed and executed an action plan to improve the quality and speed of hiring resulting in: Continued improvement of technology systems; Development of support tools such as JOA templates, PD libraries and assessment instruments; guidance on organizational performance standards; integration of existing USDA position management and workforce management policies that emphasize pre-hire planning and; Hiring manager engagement.

Hiring Reform has assisted the USDA in Cultural Transformation and accomplished:

- Applicant and manager satisfaction with the hiring process (75% and 80% respectively)
- Quality and Speed of Hiring (81.1 days as a monthly weighted average)
- Improved Scores on Employee Viewpoint Surveys
- Institutionalized positive and meaningful changes within the USDA culture.

The key to achieving Hiring Reform success has been top leadership ownership, responsibility and accountability; effective partnerships with OPM and OMB and broad collaboration and partnering across organizational lines.